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## Against All Authorities

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2017

### **document version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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### **citation for published version (APA)**

Kamphuis, B. L. F. (2017). *Against All Authorities: The New Testament Conjectural Criticism of Jan Hendrik Holwerda (1805-1886)*. [PhD-Thesis - Research and graduation internal, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam].

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## SUMMARY

Jan Hendrik Holwerda (1805–1886) was at the basis of the Dutch Movement of New Testament Conjectural Criticism in the second half of the nineteenth century. The present study explains how Holwerda's NT conjectural criticism should be understood. This is done from three different angles: chapter 2 sketches the *Sitz im Leben* of Holwerda's criticism; chapter 3 discusses its theoretical aspects; and chapter 4 analyses the conjectures themselves, frequently positioning them in the context of the scholarly engagement with the passages throughout history.

Chapter 2 shows that Holwerda's conjectural criticism should be understood against the background of the classical philology of the Leiden Radical School. Holwerda was educated according to the principles of this school by Bake, Peerlkamp and Geel, and published a 'Leiden' text-critical study on Josephus in 1847. During his first twenty years as a minister he also applied conjectural criticism to the New Testament, but without publishing these conjectures. Eventually a feud with the Leiden professor van Hengel led to Holwerda's 'coming out' as a NT conjectural critic in 1853.

Holwerda kept publishing on the New Testament for a decade, proposing more than one hundred conjectures and commanding respect as 'the Literator' of Dutch theology. Nevertheless, at an early stage and embittered, he turned his back on this field; he had antagonized too many people. Even his initial friendship with and admiration for the great Leiden Grecian Cobet turned into a life-long enmity. Yet it is clear that Holwerda exerted much influence on the next generation of Dutch NT scholars.

Chapter 3 positions Holwerda's text-critical principles over against those of contemporary NT textual critics: Lachmann, Tischendorf and Tregelles. Three variables play a role here: 1) the balance between external and internal criticism; 2) the selection of old/reliable

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manuscripts; 3) the role of conjectural criticism. For each variable Holwerda comes closest to another textual critic: for 1) Tischendorf, for 2) Tregelles and for 3) Lachmann.

Holwerda thus took up a position all his own in the NT textual criticism of his day. On the one hand this position was determined by Leiden classical philology. On the other hand Holwerda had to find his own way in the specific issues of NT textual criticism. A remarkable example of this is his deliberate and methodologically embedded preference for Codex Vaticanus, which he frequently follows when it is pushed aside by the Modern Critical Text: he emends several highly problematic B readings.

Holwerda stressed that the turn from the *Textus Receptus* towards the ‘old text’ had increased the need for conjectural criticism. He demonstrated this by making many conjectures on places where the TR reading is a solution to a problem in an older and more original reading. At the same time Holwerda thought that in many cases the text of the most ancient manuscript was corrupted beyond repair.

Chapter 4 starts with an analysis of Holwerda’s conjectures by means of a classification published earlier by Kamphuis et al. The most interesting outcome of this quantitative analysis is that Holwerda makes a remarkably large number of conjectures aimed at solving so-called ‘philological’ problems (in Holwerda’s case mainly grammatical problems). Holwerda makes about as many conjectures in the problem category ‘passage-related (content)’. However, this category seems in general to be the most dominant one in conjectural criticism.

Holwerda hardly makes any conjectures directed at solving supposed contradictions with what an author says elsewhere, or with what another biblical author says. In general, Holwerda was very critical of harmonising text-critical and exegetical decisions. Because, as he pointed out, there is often a personal interest: texts are adapted to fit the views of the scholar concerned.

Holwerda preferred ‘small’ conjectures, without theological implications— many of his conjectures are not translatable at all. In this way Holwerda hoped to promote the acceptance of NT conjectural criticism: without theological interests at stake the philological

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discussion could be conducted “purely scientifically.” A good example is his conjecture on 2 Corinthians 3:3, where he suggests omitting *καρδίας*. Ironically, it is a theologically very significant conjecture—the addition of *οὐχ* to *ἐδρηθήσεται* in 2 Peter 3:10—that receives most attention in this dissertation, because this conjecture has been adopted into the *Editio Critica Maior* of the Catholic Epistles.

The discussion of several specific conjectures in the qualitative part of chapter 4 produces a twofold image. On the one hand, there are conjectures that are only valuable because they say something about the time in which and the person by whom they were made; they are not relevant anymore within the present text-critical debate. This applies in any case to a part of Holwerda’s philological conjectures.

Halfway the nineteenth century many peculiarities of NT Greek were not well understood yet, in spite of Winer’s groundbreaking work. Under the influence of Cobet, who frequently used conjectural criticism to gloss over Hellenistic grammatical phenomena, Holwerda sometimes adapted the NT Greek to the rules of classical grammar. He did so both by privileging ‘correct’ manuscript readings over ‘incorrect’ ones, and by creating the correct reading himself if all manuscripts erred. A striking example is his treatment of *ἐν* instead of expected *εἰς* and *εἰς* instead of expected *ἐν*.

On the other hand, the present study shows that many other Holwerda conjectures do have lasting relevance. It often appears that exegetical solutions that are circulating today were already known in the middle of the nineteenth century—and that these solutions are frequently no less conjectural than Holwerda’s text-critical proposals. Besides that, Holwerda makes us aware of ‘impossible’ Vaticanus readings that cannot be well explained as corruptions of another transmitted reading. His conjectures on these places, such as his proposal to read *πότε* in Matthew 14:3, deserve serious consideration.

All in all, there is enough reason to pay attention to the proposals of a conjectural critic like Holwerda in lexicographical and commentaries at least. Indeed, this dissertation joins Ryan Wettlaufer’s recent plea for a rehabilitation of NT conjectural criticism.

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By way of conclusion, chapter 5 sketches three paradoxes that together capture the essence of Holwerda's NT conjectural criticism. First, Holwerda's conjectural criticism is inextricably bound up with his paradoxical position over against Leiden University: Holwerda was both a son and an opponent of Leiden.

The second paradox concerns Holwerda's approach to the most ancient manuscripts. On the one hand he esteemed them more than, for example, Tischendorf. On the other hand this did not mean he indiscriminately adopted the most ancient reading, as Tregelles did. Rather, Holwerda often took the Vaticanus reading and devised his own reading from there.

The third paradox is that Holwerda's conjectural criticism is a window both on his own time and on the future of the field. The discussion of specific conjectures sometimes shows that these have been superseded, for example because our knowledge of NT Greek has since advanced. But other Holwerda proposals appear not to have lost their value at all, and, together with other old conjectures that await rediscovery, constitute a challenge to 21st-century NT textual criticism.